

First record of *Styphlus transjonicus* Osella & Zuppa, 1994 from Malta (Coleoptera, Curculionidae)

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ABSTRACT. Three specimens of *Styphlus transjonicus* Osella & Zuppa from Malta were found in the collection of George Charles Champion conserved at The Natural History Museum, London. The record of this species, presently known from southern Italy represents the first one from the Maltese Islands. Previous records of *Orthochaetes setiger* (Beck) from Malta were based on misidentifications and should refer to *S. transjonicus*.

KEY WORDS. Styphlini, *Styphlus*, new record, faunistics, Malta.

INTRODUCTION

The weevil fauna (Curculionoidea) of the Maltese Islands is well documented with 184 species recorded (MIFSUD & COLONNELLI, 2010; 2018). The tribe Styphlini Jekel, 1861 is represented on Malta by a single widespread species in Europe: *Orthochaetes setiger* (Beck, 1817), first recorded from Malta by CAMERON & CARUANA GATTO (1907). More recent findings are not known despite several attempts at collecting weevils on Malta (e.g. SPRICK 2001; 2003; MIFSUD & COLONNELLI, 2010).

The examination of the specimens of Styphlini at the Natural History Museum, London (NHML) revealed that they belong to another species of this tribe, representing a new record for the Maltese Islands.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Photographs were taken with a 3.15-megapixel digital camera (ProgRes CT3) on a stereomicroscope (Nikon SMZ 1000). Series of images were captured with ProgRes Capture Pro 2.8.8 for Windows and stacked with the freely available software CombineZP Image Stacking by Alan Hadley. Reported label data is given literally within quotation marks (“”), labels are separated by a double slash (/).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

While examining Styphlini from the NHML, three specimens (1 ♂, 2 ♀♀) belonging to *Styphlus transjonicus* Osella & Zuppa, 1994 (Figs. 1–3) were discovered, all with the following label data: “Malta // G. C. Champion coll. B.M. 1927-409”. These specimens were originally collected by John James Walker between 1874 and 1876 (CAMERON & CARUANA GATTO, 1907). The date given on the

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second label (1927) refers to the year when Champion's collection was registered at the NHML and correlates with his year of death.

MIFSUD & COLONNELLI (2010) examined one of these specimens which was in poor condition and attributed it with doubt to *Orthochaetes setiger*. Re-examination of this specimen and three additional specimens (probably of the same series) showed that these belong to *Styphlus transjonicus*.



Figures 1 – 4: *Styphlus transjonicus* Osella & Zuppa, 1994 from Malta; 1: Habitus of male; 2: Ditto of female; 3: Penis lateral; 4: Ditto ventral.

OSELLA & ZUPPA (1994) provided morphological evidence to distinguish *Styphlus transjonicus* from the closely related *S. jonicus* (REITTER, 1899). *Styphlus transjonicus* is known from southern peninsular Italy (Apulia and Calabria) and Sicily (ABBAZZI & MAGGINI 2009). The present record from Malta extends the distribution of this species southwards. Its sister taxon, *S. jonicus*, is rather widely distributed on various Greek islands (e.g. Corfu, Lefkada, Kefalonia, Zakynthos and Crete) and the Peloponnese peninsula (OSELLA & ZUPPA, 1994, and personal observations). *Styphlus transjonicus* is readily distinguished from *Orthochaetes setiger* based on seven funicular segments of the antennae (instead of six in *O. setiger*), its narrower and more elongated elytra (oval in *O. setiger*), and the parallel-sided pronotum (rounded in *O. setiger*).

It would be worth doing further field work for litter-inhabiting weevils by sifting leaf litter, plant debris and cushion plants to check whether new specimens of Styphlini will be eventually rediscovered on the Maltese Islands. These weevils have low mobility and are typically found in arid, undisturbed landscapes. The possibility that they are already extinct in Malta is not excluded.

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